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Student Decision

To the Editor:

The sudden emergence of SDS as a potential power on the Columbia campus demands the attention of all students on the Columbia campus as well as the Barnard campus. The organization is less than a month old, but has already made its power felt by President Kirk. The organization is now in the process of defining its goals.

Because I recognize some of SDS's goals, which are now being verbalized and printed, as good and would like to see realization of these goals, I would like to make the following constructive criticism of what I read in Lewis Cole's Letter to the Editor of December 2, 1966, which I feel might hinder the success of SDS.

Because Lewis Cole signs under his name — "SDS Steering Committee"—I assume that the views presented in his letter represent those of the organization called SDS.

Mr. Cole stated that SDS "was formed both to keep the CIA off campus and to try to make the uses to which the University was put, dependent on the active support of the students." The two aims cannot be as easily tied together as the "and" ties them. If SDS wants to make the uses to which the University is put dependent upon the support of the students, how can they also say that they do not want the CIA on campus, as if this would be the decision the students would make, when in fact, they have taken no votes on this; they have not questioned the thousands of students who the University is to be dependent upon? If SDS wants the students to decide, how does SDS know that the students do not want the CIA on campus? With that statement, SDS could lose potential support of people who back having the students decide University policy, but who also might feel the CIA should be allowed on campus. Which is the goal of SDS? It cannot be both, for they are mutually exclusive statements at this point. I feel the goal, and the only goal, at this point, of SDS

should be to try to make the decisions about the uses to which the University is put, dependent upon the students. If this goal is complicated with other goals such as, keeping the CIA off campus, active opposition by the University to the war in Viet Nam, keeping Bennett Cerf off campus, or active opposition by the University to the war on poverty, potential backers will be lost. If the single goal of dependency of policy upon the students is achieved, then the stu-

dents will decide who they do not want on campus and what war they will not support; SDS should not decide this for them, no more than SDS feels the administration should.

Mr. Cole says that SDS is unable to be objective and that they will make judgments. He continues that SDS (as an arm of God?) will make the students "understand their needs; understand themselves as desiring subjective people . . ." Is Mr. Cole trying to shame the students? As a student, I do not want the administration or SDS to make my needs understood to me; I want to make my needs understood to the administration or to SDS. If SDS would be objective, and not make moral judgments as to what my needs are, but would work to assure that my needs would be understood and complied with, by the administration, I, as a now subjective student, would be very happy to help in this campaign. But, I do not want Mr. Cole to "overthrow" Pres. Kirk, and then tell me that I do not want Bennett Cerf on campus, when indeed I do, (or thought I did) no more than I want Pres. Kirk to tell me this now. If SDS wants achievement of student power, it cannot assert that it will teach the students understanding of their needs, since that means SDS power, not student power.

At the end of his letter, Mr. Cole is no longer saying that he will make students understand their needs, but he has assumed that these SDS defined needs have been accepted by the students on their behalf.

educated students now states emphatically—"the students will be able to say with controlled energy to Pres. Kirk that he does not represent them . . ." Where did the voting take place? I didn't get my one vote on what I want to say to Pres. Kirk, yet I am included in that statement. Mr. Cole should be stating that students will be able to say something to Pres. Kirk, which will be listened to and complied with, whether it be that they feel he does represent them or that he does not—if student power is indeed the goal.

Student power means that the students make the decisions—not the administration and not SDS. SDS cannot assert these student opinions now, for they do not know them, anymore than they assert Pres. Kirk does not know them. SDS should be working instead to make the student's opinions and needs known, listened to, and complied with by the administration—be it Pres. Kirk's or Mr. Cole's. If SDS's goal is for the decisions of the University to be dependent upon the students, as I feel it basically is and should be, SDS must not make value judgments for the students who are to ultimately make their own value judgments—for the motto is to "Let the People Decide" not SDS. SDS, in order to achieve the student power goal, around which I hope and feel many students will rally, must be objective.

Nancy Jacoby '68

December 4, 1966

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